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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1910.

Taxing the Gross Receipts of Banks.

Ostensibly a bill "to require all companies doing telegraph business in the District of Columbia to pay a tax on their gross receipts," and so designated when it was called up, a clumsily drawn measure (H. R. 2239) of far-reaching importance passed the House with scant consideration on Monday.

Its passage illustrates the present lax and inefficient handling of District legislation in that branch of Congress. It seems also to embrace a bit of sharp practice that would ill become the common council in the most ill-governed municipality.

This bill contemplates not merely the taxing of telegraph companies on their gross receipts, which may be meritorious enough, but imposes a tax of 8 per cent upon the gross receipts of all national banks, trust companies, and other incorporated banking institutions, and a smaller tax upon the gross receipts of public utilities corporations.

Sweeping in its provisions and involving problems of taxation of the weightiest sort; falsely labeled and in a guise obviously intended to mislead, it received only the small attention given to the bill for the licensing of circuses and kindred pending things of minor local character. The Commissioners of the District of Columbia recommended no such measure. They knew nothing of its existence, as a matter of fact. No hearing was given to the banking institutions, so vitally affected by its requirements. They were unaware, even, that such a plan was being formulated. No expression was sought upon it from the trade organizations that have been considering District revenues. The bill came out of the darkness, so to speak—a surprise to all.

This scheme of taxation, applied to the banks, would, if put into operation, undoubtedly affect injuriously the entire community. The added burden would inevitably necessitate higher rates of interest upon loans. It would hurt business.

Whatever merit the proposition may have otherwise, a tax upon the gross receipts of banks—not gross earnings, mind you, but gross receipts—is fraught with mischief and peril. Certainly, there is no exigency calling for the enactment. Of course, the Senate may be depended upon to inspect this measure, and inspect it carefully. Having done so, we are confident it will not emerge from committee in its present form. The manner of its passage by the House discredits it in toto.

Gentle Spring.

Said the Baltimore American of Saturday last:

"We ventured the opinion in our issue of yesterday that spring had arrived, and in support of it we put forward certain observations of a horticultural, sartorial, and meteorological nature. It now becomes our solemn duty to apologize for that ill-considered and unfortunate little essay. We were wrong, and we regret it. We promise to say no more about spring. It is an extremely ticklish subject."

We think our contemporary was entirely too precipitate with that apology. Spring is here—was here, just as the American said. It has been here for more than two weeks, at least. There are various ways of determining this. First, there is custom which starts spring along its wobbly career on March 1; then there is the ground hog, which, in its turn, releases spring along about March 15; again, there is the almanac, with its advice concerning a so-called vernal equinox and a spring subsequent thereto; and, lastly, there is one's own self, that sees spring any old time from late February on, and hears it, and gets a whiff of its perfume in the air now and then.

Which of these shall we believe to be the true advance agent of spring? All of them, say we! We accept every sign of spring in good faith—even including the book beer placards and the first robins. Then we are firm in the faith, and pay no attention to contrary arguments of one sort and another, particularly meteorological. If the violets seem about to pop up to-day and it is snowing to-morrow, we do not grow weak-kneed, like the Baltimore American, and take back all of our spring-like remarks and cancel our beautiful and poetic thoughts—not at all! We have seen spring behave that way too many times in the past not to know now that she is simply fooling. Spring is a coquette—an incorrigible coquette, of course—but she is sweet, and she means no harm.

We trust the Baltimore American will not take spring's future pranks too seriously. It did well to burst into song and was glad last week. The situation justified it. It made a mistake when it apologized. It had nothing whatever to apologize for. If the American, however, still is unconvinced that it is spring, we can prove it. Has the American not felt that "tired, lazy feeling" permeating its bones? Ha! We thought so! So, it is spring, after all!

Mr. Roosevelt says that he does not expect to be idle in the immediate future, though he has no idea of jumping into

political controversies. Wonder if Mr. Roosevelt thinks anybody thinks he knows how to be idle?

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Bracket Smith, or Little Sammie! Either will do, so take your choice. One appellation fits him as well as the other.

If we could bring ourselves seriously to consider this much-bracketed son [Smith, of Michigan, and his remarks to appear later] he would worry us. We should lose faith in the District's future and become at once the rankest pessimist. We should be prepared to see this community's interests bracketed altogether under such a chairmanship. But a statesman with the backbone of an angle worm—smile and pass him along; pass him along his bracketed pathway, with not the slightest concern in what is going to "appear hereafter."

In doing it, however, we are again moved to wonder what deadly sin this fair District of Columbia ever committed in Uncle Joe Cannon's estimation that invited its ludicrous fate of thus being linked up with Smith-Smith, of Michigan, commonly called Little Sammie Smith, and now Brackety Bracket Smith.

It makes half an insurgent of us when we think about it.

Love, Honor, and Obey.

England is having its share of the "uplift," with the suffragettes in the van. The budget is akin to the Cannon-Aldrich tariff cry, while landlordingism can be compared to the conservation imbroglio in this land. Now King Edward's little island has another crusade in its midst. This time it is the women who object to the present rites of marriage. And they are serious about it.

These women have interested Sir Charles McLaren, who has prepared eight bills which he will introduce in the House of Commons. They all bear on the rights and interests of women. His wife is a leader in the movement, and is the champion of the women's charter.

Lady McLaren is sure that woman's dignity and legal standing deserve more than she gets at the marriage altar. She wants a measure passed which will force the bishops of the Church of England to meet in convocation and relieve the feminine portion of the shackles they wear to-day.

Wives should not follow the Biblical injunction and submit to their husbands as to the Lord, is her belief. Nor does she mean to apologize for that ill-considered and unfortunate little essay. We were wrong, and we regret it. We promise to say no more about spring. It is an extremely ticklish subject."

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